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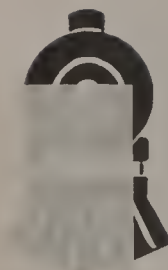
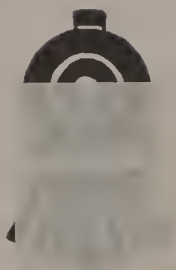
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American Books

Fire Company No 25





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ENGINE COMPANY No. 25.



Little American Books

Engine Company No 25

by *author*
Bertha M. Rhodes



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Little American Books

JUST TOM
EAGLE RANCH
SIGNALS
SPOTTED DEER'S PARTY
ENGINE COMPANY No. 25
FLAG TO THE FRONT

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AT A LITTLE before eight Christmas morning, Captain Ben opened the fire house door just wide enough to let himself in. As he did so the wind sent a shower of snowflakes whirling about his head, and a brindle dog, not much more than a puppy, pushed its way into the warmth of the engine house. Captain Ben slammed the door shut.

“Well, boys,” he said, “here’s a Christmas present!”

The brindle dog, as he stood shivering before them, was a sorry looking Christmas

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gift. His hair was wet with snow and his head and tail were drooping as he lifted his eyes to see if by any chance he might be allowed to remain.

“What’s the matter, pup?” said Captain Ben, patting him kindly. “Are you hurt?” He examined the foot which the dog held up to him.

“Got run over, didn’t you? Never mind! We’ll take care of you.”

Taking liniment and a bandage which one of the men brought to him, Captain Ben carefully bound up the foot. The clock over the watch desk struck. The gong sounded for roll call and the men took their places in line ready to answer when their names should be called. Captain Ben dropped the dog at the end of the line.



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"Jake Kennedy," he called.

"Here," said Jake.

"John Truman."

"Here."



"Howard Cameron."

"Here."

"Al Simons." Each man answered as his name was called.

"Felix, the dog," called Captain Ben.

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Felix gave a little yap and a wag of his tail. From the first he knew his name and seemed to understand that he now belonged to Engine Company No. 25.

* * * *

One warm summer day, sometime later, a little boy named Bobby stopped at the open doorway of the fire house of Engine Company No. 25. He stood quietly waiting for Captain Ben to look up, which was not at all his usual way. Captain Ben was writing at the watch desk. When he had finished he turned.

“Well,” said he, “is this a fireman?”

Bobby ran up to him.

“Yes! I’m a fireman! And when I get big I’m going to be a *real* fireman.”

“That’s a fine suit!” said Jake Kennedy.

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“My Aunt Edith sent it to me,” said Bobby. “It is just like a real fireman’s suit. How do you become a real fireman?”

“First of all,” said Fireman Jake, “you have to grow.”

“That’s right!” said Captain Ben. “You have to grow and become a strong man. See?” and he swung Bobby lightly up in the air and held him there with one hand. There was no doubt about Captain Ben’s strength.

“Fireman have to drag heavy hose,” said Captain Ben, as he let Bobby down to the floor, “and sometimes they carry people out of buildings or down ladders.”

“I know that,” said Bobby, “but how do people grow strong enough to do all that?”

“They must eat food that builds bone and



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muscle," said Al Simons, "and not just candy and sweet things."

"And they must go to bed early and sleep all night," added John Truman. "There'll be plenty staying up nights after they have joined the Company."

"That's what Mother says," said Bobby.

"Of course it is!" said Captain Ben. "You are a fortunate little boy. Some children have to learn it all by themselves if they are ever to be firemen. A fireman must always be ready to tend to duty, day or night. Come with me and I will show you." He took Bobby up a flight of stairs to a large room. In this room were a number of narrow beds.

"This is where we sleep when we are off duty," he said. Then he opened a closet to show Bobby what was on the inside.

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“This is the way we keep our clothes. At night they are kept beside our beds so we can slip into them in an instant. When the alarm sounds every man jumps, slips into his turnout, and slides down one of these brass poles into the room below. We couldn’t even wait to slide down a banister. That would take too long.”

Bobby looked at the turnout. The trousers were pulled down over the legs of big rubber boots, with rubber leggings already on. It would take only a moment to put one’s feet in and pull them up. The brass poles passed through big round holes in the floor straight to the floor below. Bobby peeped down. It looked like a very long way to drop. One would need to hold on tightly.

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“One must not only be ready,” said Captain Ben, as they went down the stairs, “but one must start the instant the alarm begins. By the time it’s finished we’re usually out on the road. Even Felix knows that.”

Captain Ben had hardly spoken when the alarm sounded.

“Click! click!—Click! click! click! click! click!” went the instrument. It was the call for Engine Company No. 25.

“Click! click! click!—Click!—Click! click! click!” which meant, “Take the telephone.” One of the men grabbed the telephone.

“Fire at West and Canalport.”

“Click! click!” He touched the instrument and sent word back, “We’re on the way.”

At the first signal Felix sprang to his

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feet. He knew the Company calls from all the others which were continually passing over the instrument. The moment the fireman sent word back, "We're on the way,"



Felix leaped up over the back of the machine and took his place, his front feet resting on the seat between the captain and driver. The men were in their places and the engine dashed out and along the street,

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the bell clanging and the dog barking.

Bobby was left alone. He glanced about him.

“They didn’t even stop to shut the door,” he said, and being a very sensible little boy, he closed it for them and went home.

* * * *

Bobby’s father returned home late that night. He had been away for several days.

“How is Bobby?” he asked.

“Bobby’s all right,” said his mother. “He’s very much interested in firemen just now. Edith sent him a fireman’s suit. He’s learned the engine house call—two, five—two five. You’ll hear all about it in the morning.” Daddy went in to look at Bobby.

“What’s this?” he said. Two little shoes stood side by side before the bed and around

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them were carefully draped the trousers of his fireman's suit.

"I'll have to be up in the morning," said Daddy, "if I don't want to be outdone by my small son!" Daddy was up first the next morning.

"I'll surprise Bobby," said he. He went down on the porch where hung the Japanese gongs with which the maid summoned them to breakfast. Taking the hammer he struck the bells—

"Ding! ding!—Ding! ding! ding! ding! ding!"

Bobby was awake in an instant.

"Ding! ding!—Ding! ding! ding! ding! ding!" That was the call of Engine Co. No. 25. Bobby sprang out of bed and slipped into his clothes. His shoes did not hold the

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trousers as tightly as the fireman's long boots. They really had to go on separately, but even then Bobby saved a great deal of time, for when one really wishes to do a thing it helps very much.

"Clang! clang! clang!" said Bobby as he rushed down the stairs and there was Daddy waiting for him. Bobby certainly was a fortunate little boy.

It was pleasant to have Daddy home again. Breakfast was served on the porch under the Japanese gong where mother could sound it whenever they wanted more toast or a cup of coffee. Bobby, being a little boy, drank milk. He had to grow and build bone and muscle. That morning his oatmeal disappeared without a word of protest.

"Of course," said Daddy, as he felt of



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Bobby's muscle, "a man cannot build a strong body all in a day any more than a carpenter can build a great building in a day. There is only one sure way and that is to begin—and keep right at it!"

After breakfast Bobby went out to play. Donald, Raymond, Susanne, Anna and Baby Jean were all waiting for him. Howard had his cart, a long one, which would make a fine fire engine. Suzanne had brought a strip of trellis from the arbor, which made an excellent ladder when placed across the cart. Donald had a cowbell which he had brought from his uncle's farm. Bobby, having a suit, was Captain.

"Clang! clang! clang!" rang the bell as they rushed along the street. They stopped at the engine house.

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“Good morning!” said Captain Ben. “You are out early.”

“Good morning!” said the children. “Good morning, Felix!” Felix walked up



to them and lifted his paw to be shaken by each of them. Then he sat down close to Bobby.

“He’s interested in your suit,” said Captain Ben. “He hasn’t much use for any-

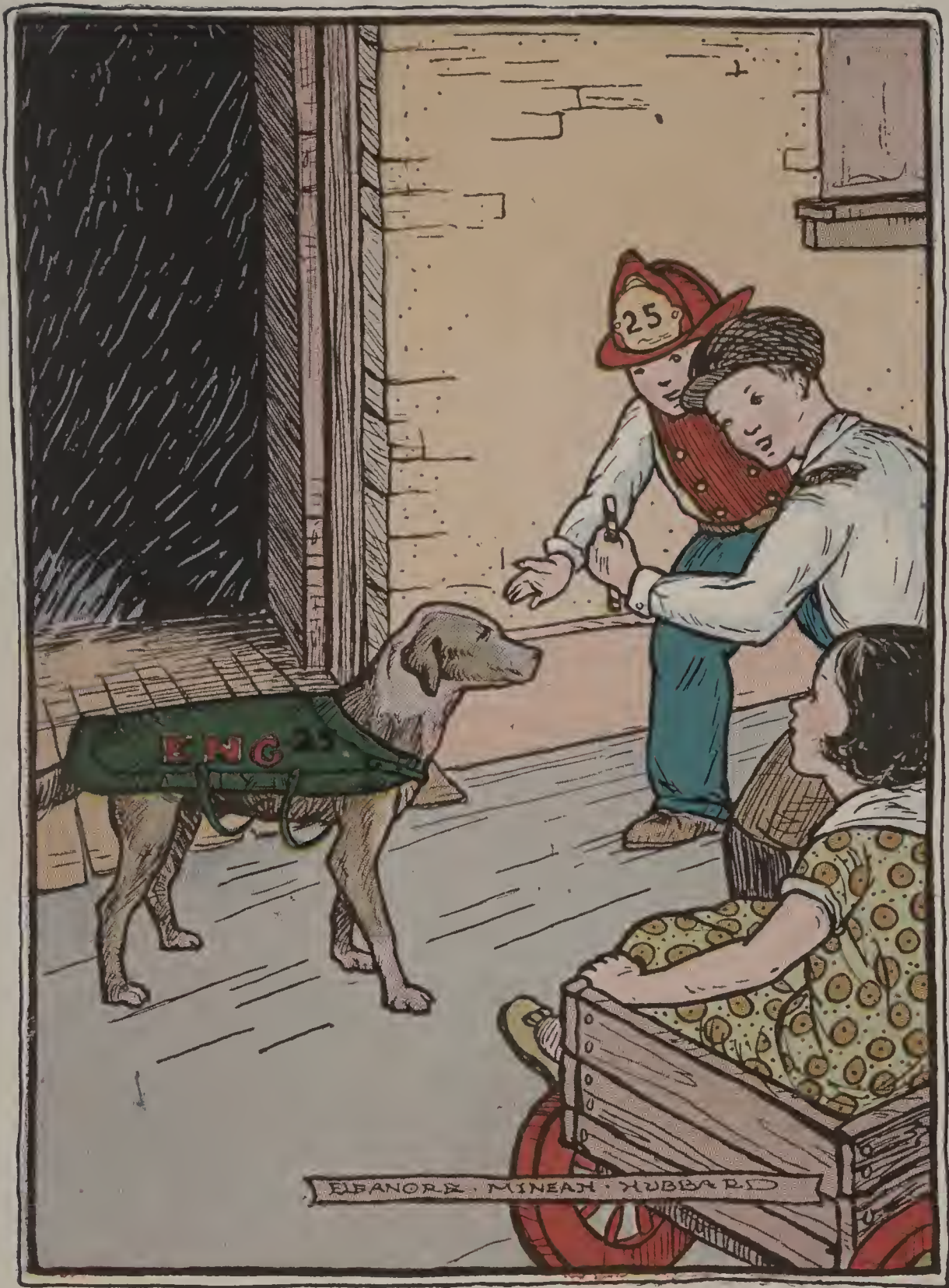
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one without a fireman's suit. If I come in wearing citizen's clothes he hardly looks at me and I cannot get him to follow me. If I have on a fireman's suit he'll go anywhere. One day he followed me to church and waited outside until service was over. Then I took him home and gave him a good Sunday dinner. That Sunday I wore my fireman's suit. You're a good dog, aren't you, Felix?" as he patted the dog on the head.

"Come with me, Felix," begged Bobby. "I'm wearing a fireman's suit, see? We need a dog on our engine."

But Felix could not be persuaded to leave the doorway, not even when Donald offered him candy, which he liked very much.

"He knows that he belongs to Engine Company No. 25," said Captain Ben, "and



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he knows just who belongs to the Company. If one of our men is changed to another Company he won't go with him even though he wears a fireman's suit. Dogs know a great deal more than people give them credit for knowing.

"There was once a fire dog, Nellie, who heard a fireman report to the Captain that one of the horses had lost his shoe on the way back to the engine house. Nellie started out at once, found the shoe six blocks away and brought it back. What do you think of that for a dog?"

"I think that's pretty good!" said Bobby.

"That was in the days when horses were used to haul the fire engines," continued Captain Ben. "We had many wonderful horses. The dogs were great friends to

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them. They used to run in front, barking.

“ ‘Clear the way! Clear the way! The fire engine is coming!’ Then men, women and children would run to the sidewalks. Now the engine runs with a motor and the dog rides with the Company, but he hasn’t forgotten his part of the business—he still barks to let people know we are coming.”

From that day it was Bobby’s one desire to get Felix to run with the play engine. Coaxing, bones, candy, ice cream cones—everything failed. Felix was blind to them all. At last the children contented themselves with ringing the bell and shouting, “Clear the way! Clear the way! To the sidewalks! The fire engine is coming!”

* * * *

“I’m going to drive the engine when I

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become a fireman,” said Bobby one day as he was talking to Captain Ben. “What does a fireman have to do so he can become the driver of the engine?”

“First of all,” said Captain Ben, “he has to drive himself.”

Bobby looked puzzled.

“How can he drive himself?” he asked.

“Well, he can’t expect to manage a good engine if he can’t manage himself, can he?” asked Captain Ben. “He’d be sure to ditch it.”

Bobby’s face brightened.

“Oh, I see!” he said. “I nearly ditched myself this morning when I didn’t want to go to the store for mother. But I went. I thought of the alarm.”

“That’s right!” said Captain Ben. “If



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you keep on you'll drive the engine some day."

"And then Felix will ride beside me and bark all the way," said Bobby with satisfaction.

* * * *

There came a very hot day not long after. The children played quietly in the shade of the trees until late afternoon. Then the sky clouded over and a fresh wind sprang up. The children ran out into the street to play ball, fire engine, and all sorts of games.

"Clang! clang! clang!" came the sound of Engine Company No. 25, as it dashed into the street, the bell ringing and the dog barking. The older children ran. Baby Jean stood in the middle of the street, bewildered by the sudden tumult.

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“Jean! Jean!” called her mother, but Jean did not move.

“Clang! clang!” shouted Bobby. “Run to the sidewalk! Fire! fire!”



Baby Jean had responded to that call often enough. She ran to the sidewalk. Engine Company No. 25 dashed by, the bell clanging and Felix barking. Jean had reached safety just in time.

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“It happened so quickly,” said Jean’s mother the next morning, as they were all gathered before the fire house, “that we hadn’t time to act. But when the engine had passed there was Baby Jean safe on the sidewalk. That little fire engine game certainly saved her that time.”

“There’s no doubt about it,” said Captain Ben. “Bobby saved her life. He’s little, but he’s a real fireman, and he shall belong to Engine Company No. 25.”

That morning when the gong sounded the men took their places for roll call.

“Jake Kennedy.”

“Here.”

“John Truman.”

“Here.”

“Howard Cameron.”



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“Here.”

“Al Simons.”

“Here.”

“Felix.”

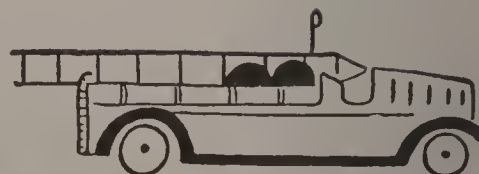
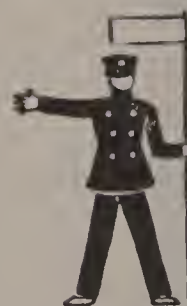
“Bow-wow!”

“Bobby.”

“Here,” said Bobby, his face shining with happiness. Then Bobby and the children went out to play fire engine. With them went Felix, barking for all he was worth:

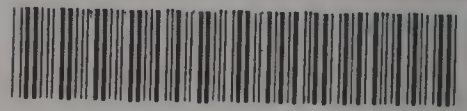
“Clear the way! Clear the way! Up on the sidewalks! Here comes a part of Engine Company No. 25!”







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